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# DO WE HAVE ENOUGH BIBLES YET? ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS AND THE TRANSITIONS THROUGH TIME

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DO WE HAVE ENOUGH BIBLES YET? ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS AND THE  
TRANSITIONS THROUGH TIME

by

Allison Stephan

Submitted to the School of Honors Committee

in partial fulfillment

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## Abstract

The Bible is read in a variety of contexts, but with the hundreds of translations in English and controversy over which is “most accurate” or “best,” this thesis examines a brief history of Bible translation, a few translation theories such as formal and functional equivalence, what to look for in a Bible translation, and some of the most common English Bible translations. A study was conducted with college students, focusing primarily on the purpose of each translation and the people who read a specified version. Finally, this thesis supports the usage of different translations in different contexts, according to the purpose and audience. The discussion affirms the idea that the Bible is the Word of God, inerrant and inspired by God, and it should be our final authority.

**KEY WORDS:** accuracy, Bible, English Standard Version (ESV), formal equivalence, functional equivalence, Good News Bible (GNB), King James Version (KJV), New American Standard Bible (NASB), New International Version (NIV), New King James Version (NKJV), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), Revised Standard Version (RSV), The Message (MSG), The Passion Translation (TPT), translation.

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I am also thankful for the support from my family, especially my mother Melissa Stephan for her wise counsel and for posing challenging questions that encouraged me to further investigate this topic. She remained constant and pushed me to do better. I could not have completed this thesis without both Amy Beatty and Melissa Stephan and will be forever grateful that they have such pronounced influences in my life.

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## I. A PERSONAL NOTE

As one who has been exposed to church lingo for the entirety of my lifetime, I have been exposed to a variety of denominations and translations, particularly the Lutheran denomination with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the New International version (NIV). However, I began reading the New Living Translation (NLT) and the English Standard Version (ESV) in high school in order to better understand passages using a different vocabulary and wording. I often had the impression that more meaning-based translations were taboo to read as they were seen as “inaccurate,” and the NLT was the “furthest” I could sway from more literal translations without jeopardizing the accuracy of Scripture. Throughout the research and writing of this thesis, my own perspective regarding Bible translations in English shifted from being frustrated at the plethora of translations in our own language about which we are so selective, to only liking certain translations, to finally, now, understanding the purposes of each version in the proper context. I encourage the reader to glean with an open mind and think beyond his/her set beliefs.

In the process of learning about Bible translations in languages other than English and understanding the amount of research and work that the translators put into these smaller language groups’ translations, I have come to recognize similar efforts in the English Bible translations. I had the opportunity during the summer of 2019 to be in Southeast Asia and talk with several translators of minority language groups about their past and current work in various languages.

The linguists and mother-tongue translators used a second or third common language to communicate (L2 or L3), and I taught the mother-tongue translators English in order to assist with communication during the translation process. My students were very eager to learn, and

each knew three to six languages, including now English. One of my students was a pastor and had read the Bible five times but not in his first language, as they are currently working on a translation for his native tongue. In class, however, we read the Gospel of Luke in the Good News Translation (GNT), also called the Good News Bible (GNB) and Today's English Version (TEV). It is a simpler and easier version of the English Bible to read, using the dynamic equivalence method of translation, and it was what was suggested for us to read ("Good News Bible"). It also contains occasional drawings that are small and simple, adding to the passages. In comparing the GNB and the ESV, a more literal translation, I noticed many differences in wording. These differences, however, do not necessarily take away from the meaning, but rather the GNB merely has a lower level of vocabulary. For example, instead of "repent," the phrase "turn away from your sins" is used (*Good News Bible: The Bible in Today's English Version*). To a biblical scholar, these concepts arguably mean something somewhat different, but for an individual learning English, it makes more sense and is the first step to understanding the full concept of repentance, especially if the person does not know the word at all and is unfamiliar with Christianity. The everyday language use is suitable in this case.

I was able to see firsthand how a translation that I, being a native speaker of English and having been raised in a Christian home, would not personally use, does, in fact, have a very important purpose and is useful in learning both English and Scripture. I will definitely continue to use the GNB in the future when teaching children, to people who do not know about Scripture, and to individuals whose first language is not English. Overall, it also encouraged me to study other English Bible translations and better understand the purposes of each, even if I personally would not prefer to use them.



## Do We Have Enough Bibles Yet? English Bible Translations and the Transitions Through Time

### II. INTRODUCTION

Unlike the early churchgoer, today's attendee has numerous versions of the Bible from which to choose. This thesis includes a literature review focused on analyzing various English Bible translations collected from online databases, libraries, websites of mission organizations, and videos from individuals educated in English translations of Scripture, including the translators themselves. I examined literature from scholarly authors, teachers, missionaries, and experts in the field in order to collect and analyze the most reliable and thorough data. From about 1600 to 1993, over 290 versions of the Bible were translated into English, and therefore most of my information comes from this time period and in the years after (Vance). A majority of the information is geographically based in Western cultures where English is the people's first language.

The literature review provides a concise history of Bible translation in English and defines a few translation theories that are most commonly used. An overview of some well-known Bible translations is presented, discussing the translators, their purposes and the people who read the translations. Strengths and weaknesses of some versions are presented in order to bring awareness to the uses of the translations, and specific elements are recommended regarding criteria to keep in mind when choosing a translation.

This thesis also includes a survey of college students from a variety of denominations in the Honors Program at a Christian liberal arts university in the southeastern United States, asking questions with regard to the translation(s) the participants' churches primarily read, students' preferred translations of Scripture, and their frustrations with regard to reading the Bible. I analyzed the major frustrations by suggesting options and methods to put people's uncertainties

at ease. In addition, I compared the results in order to find a correlation between the translation the student reads and the one that individual's church reads.

My results may have been affected by the lack of range of churches surveyed and small number of respondents. I did not take other age groups into consideration, as generational differences could make an impact in regard to the version of the Bible one reads. I also did not investigate whether one's culture factors into why a person reads a certain translation. A few of the greatest influencers, which I did not address due to the large scope of the notion, is one's upbringing, background, and church history, all of which can have great impact on a person's decision to read a specific translation of Scripture.

*Definition of terms.* "Translation" and "version" are often used interchangeably to mean a reproduction "in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style," as defined as Eugene Nida, a linguist and translation theorist (Zoe, para.8). "Interpretation," in contrast to translation, is an explanation of an idea in order to enhance understanding. Throughout the majority of this thesis, the term "translation" is used to collectively imply a Bible that contains the inspired Word of God, regardless of the translation methods used, from literal to thought-based paraphrases. I make a differentiation when necessary and for clarity.

*Questions.* The following questions have guided my thought process throughout my thesis research and investigation:

- What Bible translations are most used and are popular?
- Do people understand why they themselves choose to read certain translations over others?
- Why do people choose a certain translation(s)?
- What role does the church play in regard to what translation people read outside of church?

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Bible is not intended to be a book that is incomprehensible and unintelligible, even to a young child or an individual with a low education. Due to a massive amount of resources and scholars, we in America have a plethora of translations from which to choose, each slightly different, but what makes one better to use than another? From literal to thought-based translations, each has a different audience in mind. Similarly, each of the four Gospels portrays a different perspective of Jesus' life and is written for a different audience—Matthew for the Jews and Luke for the Gentiles—so are different translations written for different people with various levels of education and of understanding of Scripture.

The average Christian is not an expert in regard to Bible translation and what goes into the translation process, from the translation techniques used to the audience for which it was written. More often than not, a person reads a certain version because he/she likes how it sounds more than another version and therefore can understand it better. Churches also influence what translations the individuals in their congregations read, but there are other factors as well, such as his/her church background and culture.

No two languages translate exactly verbatim, and there is always a gap separating language understanding. Most Bible translators have been effective in using terminology that is comprehensible but not simplified to the point of skewing the meaning. Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and in addition to the translators' own knowledge of the languages being translated, they rely on God first in order to best communicate God's message to people in a manner that will give glory to God and build the Kingdom.

Each person should be able to understand the Bible in his or her heart language, and that is the reason why Bible translation organizations such as Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT) exist (*Wycliffe Bible Translators: About Us*). Although most people around the world are multilingual, one's native language is the one that is known best. The country's official language or the language of trade will not fully suffice in teaching people about God's love for his people. According to WBT, of the 7,000 languages known to be in current use, about 1,600 languages still need a translation project to begin, but more than 1,500 languages have access to the New Testament and some portions of other Scripture in the language. Over 650 have the Bible translated completely ("Why Bible Translation"; "About TPT").

Christianity goes beyond a single culture; it is not bound to the original culture of its founder, as it takes on other cultures through translation measures, sinking its roots into a variety of contexts. Indigenous and vernacular Christianity can be used to describe the faith in regard to inculturation: initial cultural and theological transition during which new converts to Christianity and their inexperienced communities dynamically search for the means to be a Christian in their own specific context (Pascal et al.). Christianity can be tied into a culture, but a culture does not need to conform to the ways of Western Christianity in order to do it "right." However, every culture may have features that go against the Word of God and require a change in order to truly follow Jesus.

Gambian professor of missions Lamin Sanneh discusses how the role of missions in the West has come to privatization of religion and subordination to culture. Christianity is a fundamentally pluralistic religion in that there is a diversity of forms and interpretations within Christianity. The Christian missionary movement is largely a translation movement: Jesus himself actively 'translated' his message not by using specific sacred religious language limited

to the elite, but by using “the language of housewives, carpenters, and fishermen to explain his message” in the form of parables and the like (Frederiks). No matter the audience, Scripture must be interpreted into terms they will understand without changing what God says. Bible scholar and author Jack Lewis wrote about the history of Bible translation from the King James Version (KJV) to the NIV, saying that some people argue Scripture should not be translated down to the people, but rather the people should be educated up to the Bible. Lewis explains, “This logic, carried to its ultimate conclusion, would leave the Bible in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek and impose upon us the obligation of teaching all people those languages” (Lewis 9). His argument is the very reason missionaries and linguists translate the Bible into people’s first languages.

Controversies in Bible translation are not a new avenue, as religious leaders hotly debated and rejected translations of Scripture from the very first translations, such as the Septuagint. The first translators of the Bible into English were imprisoned and killed, such as William Tyndale and John Wycliffe (Foxe 101, 132, 133). These pioneers for English Bible translations merely wanted the people to have the Scriptures in their own language and suffered the consequences from religious extremists who viewed the translations as perversions of the Scriptures. Although the living and breathing Word of God should be regarded with deep respect, no translators ought to be burned or murdered for their actions, and thankfully, the repercussions are less dire today.

The history of the English translation of the Bible is long and difficult. Translators such as John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, and Myles Coverdale were persecuted and risked their lives so that the Bible could be read in English (Foxe 101, 132, 133, 151). Professor of religion Ralph Harlow explained, “The Bible is a universal book: a book for all mankind. It speaks directly and universally to men of all races and every civilization” (Harlow 4). Therefore, there will always be challenges in translation regarding the exact meaning of words and the grammar that goes

along with it. Although the risks of Bible translation work are less, it is still a difficult process, requiring patience and courage. (Harlow).

*Major Bible translation theories.* A common question people who are looking for a Bible translation to read on their own tend to ask, “Which translation is best?” The English language has debatably hundreds of versions, allowing us to be very particular about which translation we prefer to read. Many theories have been developed and applied to translating the Bible, and of them, two stand out: formal equivalence and functional equivalence. Formal equivalence, also known as complete equivalence, is a literal or word-for-word translation. The goal is to communicate the text in the same form as the original, but the word order can be changed since every language is different.

These differences create challenges when translating idioms and cultural analogies, so no translation is completely literal all the time. An interlinear Greek-Hebrew-English Bible is useful for reading the literal translation of the text, but it is not readable, only practical for deep study, as that is the value of formal equivalence translations. For example, Matthew 1:18 describes Mary as pregnant, literally as “having [a child] in the stomach,” but this should be better translated and paraphrased in order to make it understandable and less awkward to read. A purely literal translation is not possible, as exemplified in 1 Peter 1:13, where the literal translation is “gird [or having girded] up the loins of your mind,” which makes no sense in English. Idiomatically, it means “pay attention” or “prepare for action.” Even the ESV translates it as “preparing your minds for action,” and similarly the New American Standard Bible (NASB) states, “prepare your minds for action.”

Functional equivalence translations are also known as dynamic equivalence translations; they are phrase-for-phrase or thought-for thought in manner and are more meaning-based. The main concern is with communicating the thought and meaning behind the text, and this typically involves changing the grammatical form and rewording expressions so that the text is understandable. For example, Psalm 23:5 literally reads “you anoint my head with oil” in the ESV, but the GNB replaces it with “welcomed me as an honored guest,” as this is more understandable to someone unfamiliar with this idiom (Stewart).

However, translators using dynamic equivalence must be careful when translating in order to not misunderstand the original text or add to or subtract from the Word of God. Overall, formal equivalence translations are faithful to the original in *form*, and functional equivalence translations are faithful to the original in *meaning*. Formal equivalence typically sacrifices readability for accuracy; therefore, one should study a formal translation alongside a functional one, as both have their strengths and weaknesses.

For example, the Revised Version (RV), NASB, New King James Version (NKJV), KJV, and ESV are all considered to be more literal, listed from most to least. The Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) is considered to be intermediate; it mediates between form and function. The New English Translation (NET), NIV, and NLT are considered to be more idiomatic, listed from least to most. The image in Appendix A includes a handful of Bible translations, including some of the translations listed previously, and divides them into three categories: formal equivalence, intermediate, and functional equivalence, listed the most literal to most idiomatic (Barry).

In a blog post by *What Christians Want to Know*, author and pastor Jack Wellman wrote an article regarding criteria to keep in mind when choosing a Bible translation to read. He gives a



brief overview of the history of Bible translation and acknowledges that there is no simple answer to which translation is “best.” It is important to find a translation that is accurate, as some popular translations, such as The Living Bible (TLB), the Message (MSG), and the Amplified Bible (AMP), paraphrase too much, leaving the interpreting of Scripture to the translators rather than the readers. Wellman also recommended that readers buy a study Bible and research the translation, but he mentions that a reader should use more than one translation and compare them. His preferences are the KJV, NKJV, and ESV. Overall, he determines that the “best” translation is subjunctive, and just because it is the most popular does not necessarily imply that it fits everyone’s preferences. This reliable, succinct list contains helpful criteria to keep in mind when searching for a translation to read (Wellman).

Laurence Vance, a scholar in biblical theology with a partial Baptist educational background, wrote a list of all of the English translations and versions of the Bible from 1600 to 1993, totaling over 290. Since 1993, however, many more have been written; in all, they add up to an estimated 300-450 translations, as there is not a clear definition as to what is considered a “translation” of Scripture (Vance; “Bible Translations into English”). However, we should be thankful and appreciate all of the resources that are available in regard to biblical studies, as it is an incredibly good problem to have, as almost every other language does not have the quality of materials in both print and digital that English has. It has never been simpler for English-speakers to find study tools and aids for Scripture (Ward, para.10).

*Formal equivalence translations.* The KJV is one of the most famous and widely used translations of the Bible, famous for King James I of England selecting the top biblical scholars and linguists to translate the Bible for Protestants. As a revision of the Bishop’s Bible of 1568,

the KJV was completed in 1611 and has remained the preferred translation of many for centuries, as it is still popular today. Originally, it was intended to replace the Geneva Bible but took time to do so. Overall, the translators intended to make God's Word more accessible to more people, as those higher in society wanted the language to remain complex. The KJV is widely recognized for its precision and accuracy (Fairchild). The KJV came to be known as "the Authorized Version," but it required revisions due to the change in language use, and many more manuscripts have been discovered over the centuries, allowing for more accurate translations of Scripture.

D. A Carson, a Canadian Reformed Evangelical theologian, wrote a book regarding the KJV and why it should not be defended as the only acceptable translation. He discusses how the KJV was translated and responds to various arguments. Some scholars claim that the KJV is a more accurate translation, but accuracy depends on the literalness of the translations. Carson explains that there is a spectrum to how passages can be translated (see Appendix B), since no true readable word-for-word translation exists. Some people prefer the KJV because it is easiest to memorize and read aloud, but many of these responses are because of tradition, as it has been a popular translation for centuries. Modern language has changed since the publication of the KJV, and more manuscripts have been found, further improving translations (Carson).

The NKJV was translated with the same intention as the KJV, for the translators in the Preface to the KJV state that they did not intend "to make a new translation...but to make a good one better" (*The Holy Bible, New King James Version* iii). The NKJV is a continuation of the labors of the former translators (*The Holy Bible, New King James Version* iii-v). Contemporary pronouns and verb endings are removed from the NKJV because they are now obsolete in the English language. The NKJV also retains doctrinal and theological words such as "justification,"

“propitiation,” and “sanctification,” as they are familiar to many English-speaking Christians. However, this creates a gap in the linguistic understanding of newer Christians who are unfamiliar with these words. The NKJV has also been mildly criticized for losing the literary beauty of the KJV.

The Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the English Bible was introduced to the public in 1952 as a revision of the American Standard Version (ASV), but it quickly received a great deal of criticism, including people calling it “The New Communist Bible,” “The Devil’s Masterpiece,” and “Modernism’s Unholy Bible.” Some people who were affiliated with the publisher, the National Council of Churches, were also connected to socialist and communist organizations. Simply knowing these affiliations with translators caused people to lose confidence in the translation due to the “religious cut-throats with whom ‘honesty’ appears to be a lost virtue” (Larue 301). There were many anti-communist sentiments during this time period, proving that the culture surrounding a translation also impacts how the translation will be received and how reliable it is. American scholar of religion Gerald A. Larue explained further why the RSV should not be read, saying, “The RSV was condemned as the product of a group that was unfit to produce a revision of the Bible” (Larue 301–02).

Other biblical scholars, however, give the RSV more credit, as it overall is a decent translation and used the KJV as a starting point for its textual basis, even though it left out a few KJV verses (Winger, *Can I Trust Bible Translations*). It was intended to be a middle ground between literal and idiomatic translations. The RSV, as noted in Appendix A, was also used as the basis for several popular translations used today, such as the highly valued ESV which used the 1971 RSV text as a basis, and more popularly addressed as a reliable translation overall (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* vii).

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) was released in 1989, and in the Preface the committee of translators explains that this “revision is yet another step in the long, continual process of making the Bible available in the form of the English language that is most widely current in our day.” It is an authorized revision of the RSV, which revised the ASV, which was also a revision of the KJV. The translators acknowledged the defects with the KJV, as more biblical manuscripts were discovered. The translators followed the idea, ‘as literal as possible, as free as necessary,’ and thus, it remains essentially a literal translation. They continued, “Paraphrastic renderings have been adopted only sparingly, and then chiefly to compensate for a deficiency in the English language—the lack of a common gender third person singular pronoun.” The NRSV was written for people to read aloud in public, in church worship, and in personal study, instruction, and prayer, young and old alike “in language that is direct and plain and meaningful to people today” (*New Revised Standard Version* xi–xv).

The NRSV is more dynamic than the RSV upon which it is based, but some scholars consider it more literal, as it is more gender-inclusive than most translations, but overall, it is fairly accurate despite a few verses being skewed in translation (Winger, *Can I Trust Bible Translations*). Some versions of this translation also include the Deuterocanon, and thus the NRSV is used by many Catholic and Baptist biblical scholars. In a blog post discussing the differences between the NRSV and NASB, the general consensus was that the NRSV is more liturgical than the NASB, making it more appropriate for worship. The former translation also includes the Deuterocanon, and thus, more Catholic and non-Protestant biblical scholars use that version for deep study of Scripture (“NRSV vs. NASB”).

Mark D. Given, a college professor of religious studies with a Baptist background, wrote a list of translations that are appropriate for serious study, the most appropriate being the NRSV,

as he believes it to be the most accurate, especially in regard to it being written more word-for-word. He next listed the RSV, New American Bible (NAB), and NET as next appropriate, followed by the NASB, ESV, and HCSB, declaring each to be good but not the best for deep study of Scripture. He listed the following as unacceptable for serious study, as they have shortcomings: KJV, NKJV, NIV, Today's New International Version (TNIV), and any dynamic equivalence versions (TEV, Contemporary English Version [CEV], NLT, AMP, MSG) (Given).

The ESV is adapted from the RSV and is an essentially literal translation, seeking to capture both exact wording of the original text and the personal style of each Bible writer as best as possible. This translation also retains theological terminology—such as justification, redemption, and reconciliation—due to the importance of the words within Christian doctrine. Although all translations to an extent vary between literal precision and readability, the ESV does this while preserving clarity of expression and literary value. Therefore, it is ideally suited for in-depth study of Scripture, public reading and preaching, private reading, memorization, and for academic and devotional study (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* vii, viii).

This translation is similar to the NASB but is more readable, as the NASB has been criticized for being somewhat wooden and awkward because it remains so faithful to the original form of the text and includes italics throughout. Despite the unnatural readability of the NASB, it is still widely accepted within seminaries and scholastic circles for in-depth study (Winger, *Can I Trust Bible Translations*). The NASB was published in 1971 as a revision of the ASV, which was published in 1901 as a revision of the KJV. The translators sought to incorporate the newest Hebrew and Greek manuscripts in addition to using more contemporary language than the previous translations upon which the NASB was based (*The Zondervan NASB Study Bible* viii).

*Intermediate translations.* Some translations are more of a balance between formal and functional equivalence translations; these are considered to be intermediate translations (see Appendix A). One theologian with a Baptist background, Jacob D. Myers, included in his book regarding interpretations of Scripture that “biblical meaning is constantly reframed by contextual circumstances...and biblical interpretation is marked by both its necessity and messiness. However, any and every interpretation is not necessarily acceptable, as it must agree with the rest of Scripture, and “foster a greater love for God and neighbor” (Myers 45–47).

The NIV was first published in 1985 and is now the top-selling Bible in English. The translators’ goal, aside from enabling English speakers to read the Word of God, is “to recreate as far as possible the experience of the original audience” by prioritizing accuracy, clarity, and quality to make a version “suitable for both public and private reading, evangelism, teaching, preaching, memorizing, and liturgical use” (*The NIV Study Bible* xi). Hundreds of scholars from all over the world and many denominations worked on the first edition of the NIV, safeguarding it from sectarian bias. Even though it is the most popular translation used, it is also the most criticized version for how words are sometimes translated, but overall, it is accurate most of the time. The translators of the NIV also acknowledge that the work of Bible translation is never complete because English translations must be updated in order to continue to accurately communicate the Word of God. Thus, most translations undergo occasional updates and publish new editions. The target audience for the NIV were general English-speakers all over the world. (*The NIV Study Bible* xi–xv)

Dr. David Jeremiah, a Southern Baptist author and pastor, released an NIV study Bible, in which he explains the NIV translation, and he and his team also acknowledged that Bible translation work is never finished. As biblical scholars have a deeper understanding of the

biblical world and today's languages, translators make revisions. The Committee of Translators for the NIV does not insist on a functional equivalence approach to translation since the English syntax does not necessarily follow the Greek or Hebrew syntax. They do not sacrifice the natural expression of an idea for the functional equivalence translation method (The Committee on Bible Translation xliii–xlvi).

*Functional Equivalence Translations.* The GNB was published in 1976 as a translation seeking to clearly and accurately state the meaning of the original texts using language structures and words that are used in standard, everyday English, and thus the translators strayed from the typical vocabulary and style of most Bibles. It was written both for people whose mother tongue is and is not English and who use English as a means of communication. The translators intended to remain faithful to the original texts without using words that are not in current or widespread use (*Good News Bible: The Bible in Today's English Version* i–v).

The MSG Bible is often not taken seriously by biblical scholars due to its lack of exactness and even acknowledged as taboo for reading Scripture. Some biblical scholars do not think it should even be read casually because it is so different from the original (Winger, *Can I Trust Bible Translations*). However, upon closer inspection of the version, it provides introductions to the books, providing context for those who know little about it. The translator, Eugene Peterson, provided a preface and introduction at the beginning, explain how he came to write it. As pastor and teacher of biblical languages, he noticed that fewer people were interested in learning about the Bible, as there was a gap in the language of today and the language of the Bible. After many years of teaching and bridging this gap, the MSG resulted. Peterson stated, “[It] is a reading Bible. It is not intended to replace the excellent study Bibles that are available.

My intent here...is simply to get people reading it who don't know that the Bible is readable at all, at least by them, and to get people who long ago lost interest in the Bible to read it again" (Peterson 8). He even encourages the reader to eventually buy a study Bible in order to facilitate further study. The average person reading the Bible is not a scholar but ordinary, working-class people. However, many are under the impression that someone else must interpret it for them (Peterson 7–10). Jesus came as a servant and humbled himself, rather than coming as a sophisticated, educated intellectual; therefore, reading a Bible that uses more relatable and understandable language is more valuable.

The Passion Translation (TPT) has been quickly gaining attention and support by well-known pastors and teachers, especially in charismatic world, such as Pastor Bill Johnson of Bethel Church, Pastor Bobbie Houston of Hillsong Church, and Lou Engle with The Call ("About TPT"). The New Testament was released in October 2017 and was primarily translated by Dr. Brian Simmons, a Bible teacher and former missionary who co-translated a New Testament in Central America; Simmons, among others, desired for readers to better discover the heart and passion of God in this "new, fresh, fiery translation" (*FAQs – The Passion Translation*). Some of the translations are similar to formal equivalence translations, but other verses are not. For example, Psalm 46:10 in the ESV states, "Cease striving and know that I am God; / I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (*ESV Bible, The Single Column Journaling Bible*). In comparison, TPT states, "Surrender your anxiety! / Be silent and stop your striving and you will see that I am God. / I am the God above all the nations, / and I will be exalted throughout the whole earth" (*The Passion Translation*). Each is evidently the same verse in differing wording, but liberty is given in TPT.



However, not all passages are translated this similarly, causing TPT to be hotly debated among some biblical scholars and pastors. For examples, in John 1:1, TPT translated “Word,” referring to Jesus as “Living Expression.” This is a theological interpretation that could raise problems regarding Christology and who Jesus is.

The main issue with this translation is that: it is not a *translation*, but rather an individual’s *interpretation* of Scripture, even though Simmons claims that it is a balance of preserving both the literal meaning and the original message (*FAQs – The Passion Translation*). Therefore, it is concerning if it is to be used as a commentary or guide for study (“What Is the Passion Translation of the Bible?”; Wilson). Despite Simmons and his support team explaining that it is a translation not rooted in a specific tradition or denomination, there is much phrasing that is consistent with his own theology and not Christianity in general. Most translations also involve multiple, even hundreds of people so that the resulting version is transdenominational and prevents translator and sectarian bias, but there is seemingly little effort to do so. For example, TPT uses “release” often, a term that his sect uses frequently as well, as in John 16:7, Galatians 1:3-4, and Colossians 1:21-22. As Harry Freedman, a British author on religion and culture, states, “Unlikely as it may seem, there is only a fine line between Bible translation and sectarian conflict” (Freedman 2). Translators must be aware of how specific phrasing affects those from different denominations when translating Scripture, especially when working on a translation project with little additional assistance.

Additions traditionally are in italics to show words or phrases added for additional meaning, as in the NASB, but the additions to TPT are self-interpreted and inconsistently seen in italics. Simmons believes TPT is a great translation to use as a primary text for deep study of God’s Word (*FAQs – The Passion Translation*). However, human additions to Scripture should

not necessarily be required in order for people to understand God's Word, for it is a living text, and the Spirit of God works within His people. Although language changes, the Word of God does not.

Pastor Mike Winger of Hosanna Christian Fellowship in California is a Bible teacher and has done extensive research on TPT and other Bible translations; regarding TPT he says, "In my opinion, [it] is more sectarian than the Jehovah's Witnesses' New World Translation—that is, there are more places where he's adapting and changing the text than even they did in their version" (Winger, *My Concerns About The Passion Translation and Brian Simmons*). Therefore, he claims it should not even be used as a secondary Scripture due to the inconsistency and inaccuracy. Winger is strongly against reading TPT, explaining that it "is riddled with self-imposed interpretations that do not fully capture the true meaning of the original text" (Winger, *My Concerns About The Passion Translation and Brian Simmons*).

*Surveys regarding English Bible translations.* In a 2017 survey commissioned by the American Bible Society and conducted by Barna Group, adults were asked a variety of questions regarding Bible engagement, spirituality, perceptions of Scripture. A portion of the survey focused on what version of the Bible they read most often. Among the 2,030 respondents, 31 percent replied the KJV, 13 percent the NIV, 9 percent the ESV, 7 percent the NKJV, 7 percent the AMP, and the remaining 32 percent replied other versions, including 8 percent who replied "not sure." From 2011 to 2017, the percentage of those reading KJV decreased from 45 percent to 31 percent, perhaps because individuals are moving away from the language of tradition toward more modern and understandable language. The percentage of those reading NIV increased 3 percent, from 10 percent to 13 percent. The percentage of those reading ESV increased from 3 percent to

9 percent and AMP increased from 2 percent to 7 percent. The other changes in other translations were not significant. Of the 2030 individuals surveyed, 63 percent were white, and 37 percent were nonwhite (Barna Group, “State of the Bible 2017” 11, 46). The surveyors analyzed the responses in regard to ethnicity, but no conclusions were directly drawn regarding ethnicity and version of the Bible read, only whether the individuals were practicing or non-practicing of their faith.

In the 2018 survey conducted, 64 percent of respondents were white, and 36 percent were nonwhite. Questions were not asked regarding the translation of Scripture read (Barna Group, *State of the Bible 2018: Bible Engagement Segmentation* 33). In 2019, of the 2013 respondents, 65 percent were white and 35 percent nonwhite. Again, questions were not asked regarding the translation of Scripture read (Barna Group, *State of the Bible 2019 Report* 58). The survey I conducted used this information, and I compared it to my own results (See Section V. Data Analysis).

*Choosing a translation.* In choosing a translation of the Bible to read, there is not always black-and-white, right or wrong answer. A reader must take several aspects into consideration: just because it is the most popular does not mean that it is the most accurate. Many popular translations are simpler to read, as they are often paraphrased, causing some meanings to be misleading. Reading more than one translation, especially a study Bible, often aids in a more comprehensive understanding of the original text and context of Scripture (Wellman). Many people, however, read the version that their church reads or what they were raised reading because it is the most familiar to them, but understanding what methods were used to translate a specific version of the Bible helps a great deal in knowing the purpose of each. In Acts 8 Phillip

asked the Ethiopian man whether he understood what he was reading in Isaiah or not, and he replied that he could not unless someone guided him. Likewise, sometimes others' wisdom and biblical knowledge is helpful in better understanding the context.

The American Bible Society (ABS) described how to pick a Bible, naming various translations for different age groups and purposes. For children, young people, and those unfamiliar with the Bible, they recommended the CEV, NLT, NIV, or GNB because the language used is often more readable and modern, avoiding challenging phrases and words. For use in worship and public reading, they recommended the NRSV, NIV, KJV, and GNB. For small group Bible study, the ABS recommended a study Bible that contains introductions to the books, notes, and maps for clarity. Some versions they recommended include the CEV, NIV, NRSV, and GNB. For personal study, they stated that it typically is merely one's preference, but it is helpful to use a study Bible. Some popular modern translations include the CEV, GNB, and the NLT, and some translations that are more literal are the NASB and NRSV. The ABS also recommended using more than one translation to compare. For private devotional time, they mentioned that the KJV and NKJV are more familiar and good to use, and they recommended the Revised English Bible (REB) and New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) due to the poetic and contemporary language ("How to Pick a Bible for Your Purpose").

Biblical scholars Alvera and A. Berkeley Mickelsen together wrote a book about how to read and study Scripture. The Bible can be overwhelming to try to understand, but by reading it with an open mind and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, God will reveal to us His message of salvation and freedom from sin. The authors further explain that it takes time and effort to harmonize all of the features of biblical interpretation encompassing "language, historical backgrounds, culture patterns, figurative language, etc. to arrive at the original

meaning of the passages we are studying,” especially in the world of today. There is not a specific rulebook for how to personally interpret Scripture, only guidelines to help readers via discussions with other believers and prayer (Mickelsen and Mickelsen 132–34).

We are fortunate to have so many translations of the Bible in English, but we should also be aware of how certain versions are translated and how they are intended to be used. It is not always beneficial to read only one version of the Bible; using multiple and comparing a formal equivalence translation to a functional equivalence translation helps one grasp a fuller understanding of the text. There will always be a gap in the translation from the original, but that does not make it wrong, inaccurate, mistranslated, or inerrant. It is still the inspired Word of God, and we should treat it as such.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

After a review of the literature, a survey was developed and distributed to the students in the Honors Program at a Christian liberal arts university in the southeast, seeking the perspectives of college students around the same age and from a range of denominations at a school associated with the Assemblies of God. The questionnaire sought to investigate which translation(s) of the Bible the participant's church primarily reads and which versions the participants prefer to read. Additional questions were asked regarding secondary translations read and frustrations students have with reading Scripture.

This survey involved quantitative research in the analysis of percentage questions. Each question was analyzed in a chart displaying the responses as percentages. After receiving all responses, I categorized the answers by the questions asked, such as what version of the Bible their churches read and preach from and what version they themselves read and compared the two. I created charts based on the data and described the data in more detail. Some of the quotations included are edited grammatically.

The questionnaire was sent through Survey Monkey via email to 217 students, and 74 responded. One limitation of the survey is even though there was a 34 percent response rate, a greater quantity of responses would increase the reliability of the research. The lack of range of churches surveyed also skewed results, as many are from Assemblies of God or Pentecostal backgrounds. Another limitation was the narrow age gap of the respondents because of the high young adult population of the university. Different generations have different patterns of thinking, and this could have an impact on the topic I researched as well. However, it was beneficial to use a specific age group because of language similarities and preferences, thus

increasing the validity, as language is constantly changing and impacts one's preference of Scripture for understanding.

Another factor which should have been investigated was the demographics of the individual, specifically, the ethnicity and culture. Perhaps one of the greatest factors with the largest scope of research required is one's church background and upbringing, and although I asked about it briefly in my survey regarding a person's denomination and first translation of the Bible to which he/she was exposed, I did not analyze the impacts of it in-depth. I also did not ask about details regarding how one became a believer; other factors such as spiritual trauma, family history, and general exposure to and understanding of Christianity would impact student responses.

I did not take individuals with disabilities into consideration, as translations vary for large print versions and audio versions and could therefore alter the respondents' answers. Thus, it is not statistically significant of all regions of North America.

However, focusing on one specific group of individuals permitted the ability to have a control group against which to compare responses from previous research and gain a more accurate understanding regarding collegiate students at a Christian university reading the Bible. The survey questions were as follows:

1. What denomination of the Christian faith do you practice?
2. What translation of the English Bible did you grow up reading or were first exposed to when you began attending church?
3. From which translation does your church read in preaching and teaching?

4. How often does your church use more than one translation in preaching and teaching?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Almost never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Almost always
- ☐ Always
- ☐ Not sure

5. Which translation overall do you prefer to read on your own? Why?

6. How often do you use more than one translation in your personal reading? What is it?

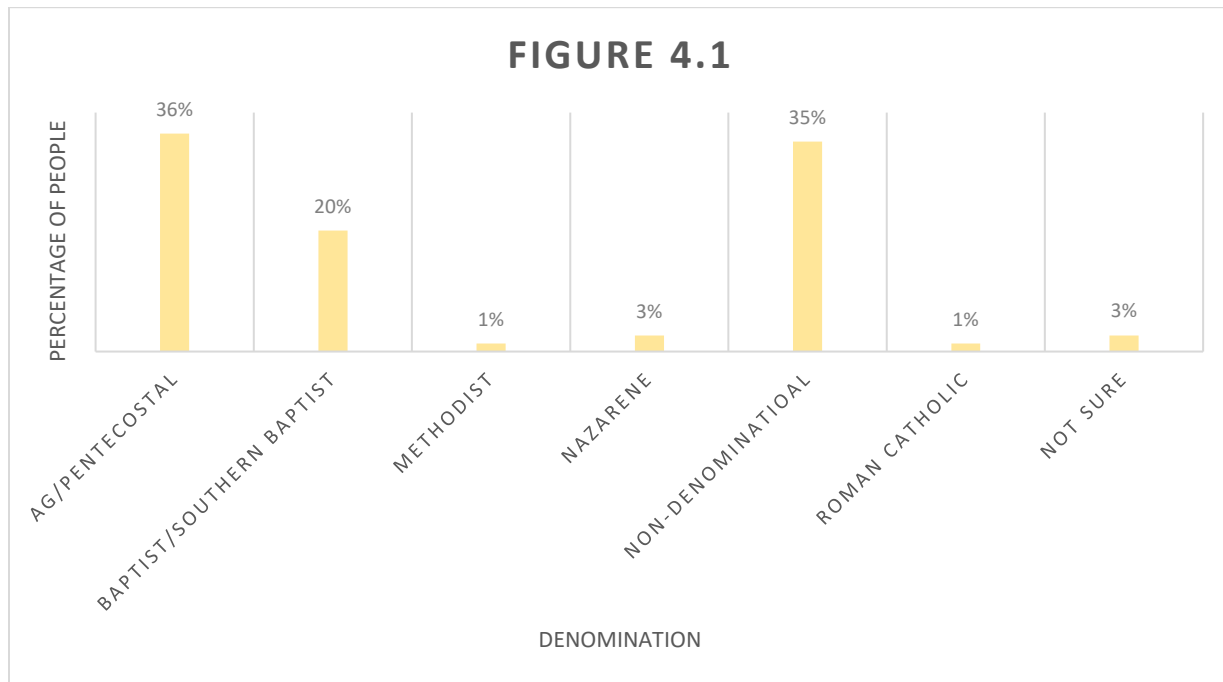
Why do you read it? (I.e. do you use one translation for deep study and another to have a better understanding of the passage?)

7. What is your most significant frustration when it comes to reading the Bible?



## V. ANALYSIS OF DATA

### 1. What denomination of the Christian faith do you practice?



As Figure 4.1 shows, 36 percent of students responded as practicing as “AG/Pentecostal,” and 24 percent of them solely identified with Assembly of God (AG), 8 percent with Pentecostalism, and 4 percent mentioned both AG and Pentecostalism. Because AG is a branch of Pentecostalism, these responses were categorized as one on the graph. This higher percentage was to be expected since the university where the research was conducted is affiliated with the AG denomination, and many students thus identified with it also.

Baptist and Southern Baptist were categorized together, and only 3 percent in this category identified as Southern Baptist. Three percent of students responded they associate with both the Baptist denomination and non-denominationalism, one individual having said, “grew up Baptist, now more non-denominational,” and they were categorized as “Baptist/Southern Baptist.” One percent responded “Methodist” and 3 percent “Nazarene” and were categorized respectively. One percent responded as nondenominational with an AG background, and another

one percent mentioned both non-denominational and AG in the response; both were categorized as “non-denominational.” One percent responded as “Roman Catholic” and 3 percent as “not sure” and were categorized respectively.

2. What translation of the English Bible did you grow up reading or were first exposed to when you began attending church?

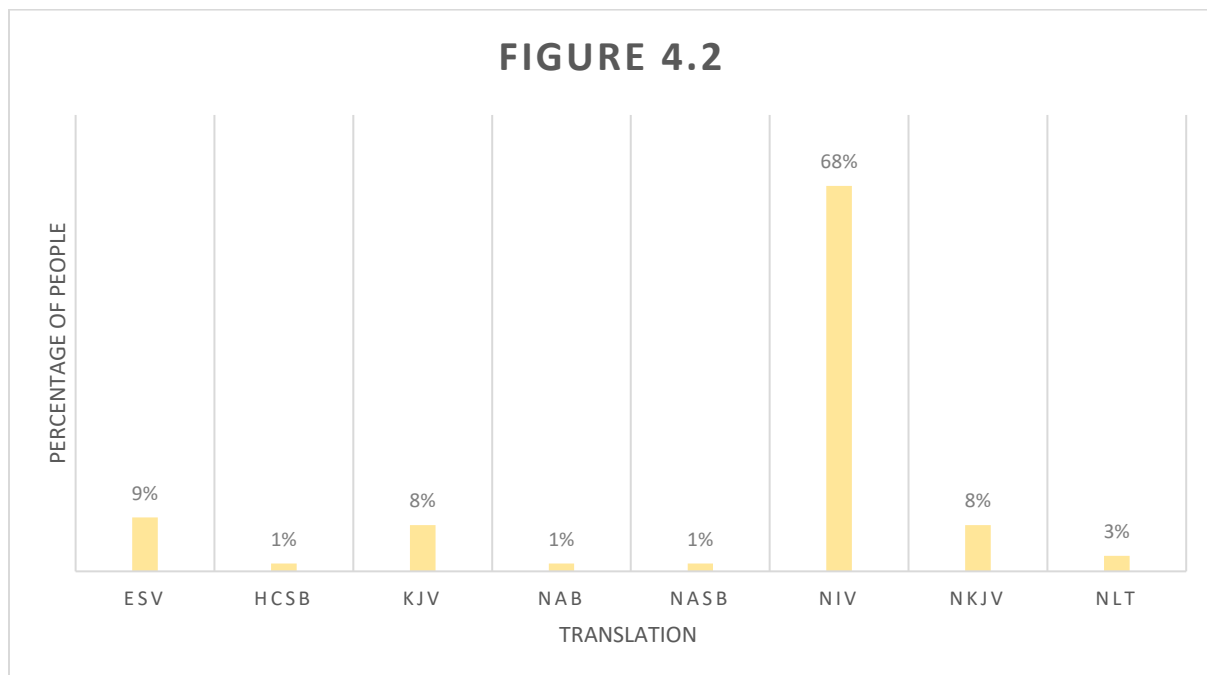
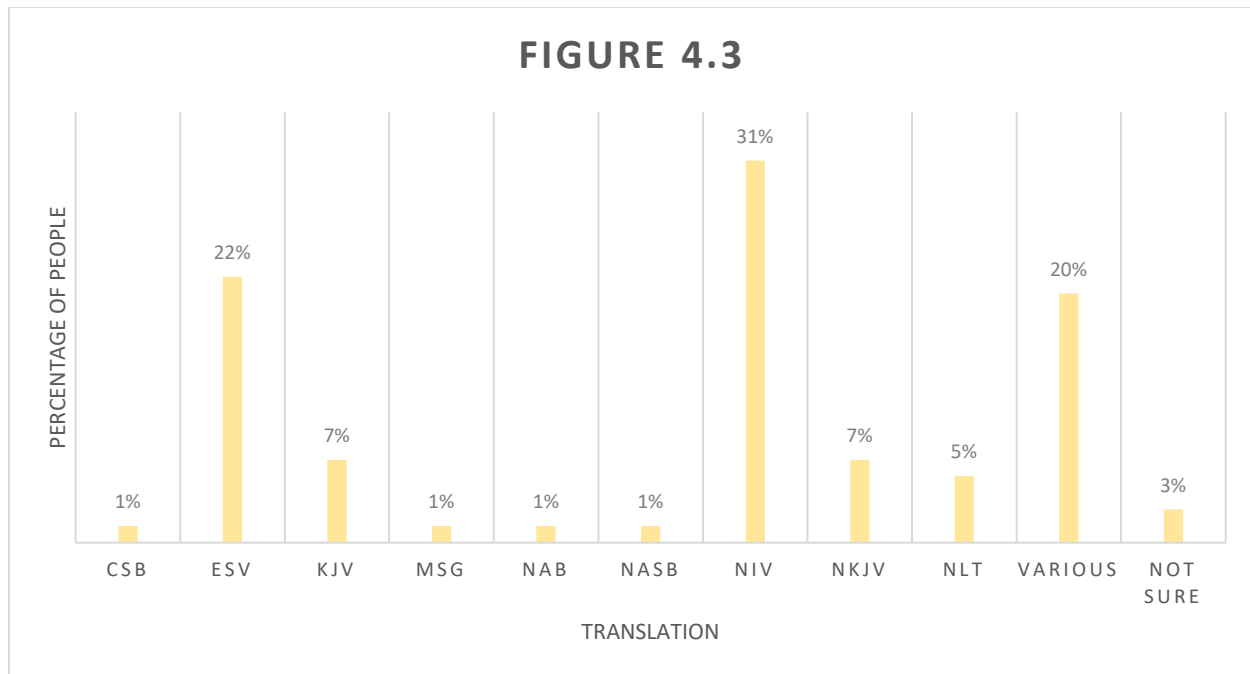


Figure 4.2 displays the main Bible translation students were first exposed to when they began attending church. Some students mentioned more than one translation when asked what English Bible to which they were first exposed. Those who mentioned more than one translation, the translation that was first mentioned was used in data analysis. Nine percent of students responded that they initially were exposed to the ESV; 1 percent responded “HCSB,” 8 percent responded “KJV,” 1 percent responded “NAB,” 1 percent responded “NASB,” 68 percent responded “NIV,” 8 percent responded “NKJV,” and 3 percent responded “NLT.” The responses of the students who answered with more than one translation show that people may be exposed

to more than one translation and overlap into other categories. Overall, 68 percent of people were first exposed to the NIV, suggesting that most pastors and church teachers view it as overall a good translation.

### 3. From which translation does your church read in preaching and teaching?

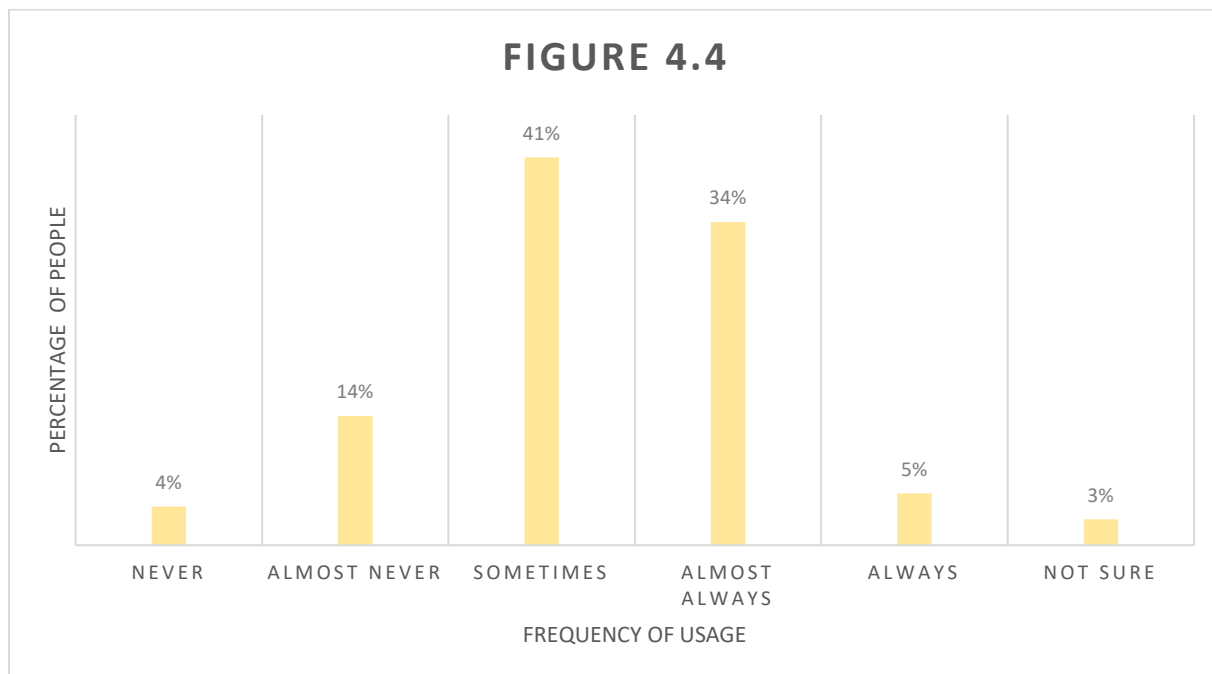


As Figure 4.3 shows, when asked what translation students' churches read in preaching and teaching, many responded "ESV" or "NIV." Some students also provided more than one response, but the first translation first recorded was used for data analysis. If the students responded with three or more translations, the answers were categorized as "various."

One percent responded "CSB," 22 percent responded "ESV," 7 percent responded "KJV," one percent responded "MSG," one percent responded "NAB," one percent responded "NASB," 31 percent responded "NIV," 7 percent responded "NKJV," 5 percent responded "NLT," 20 percent provided various responses, and 3 percent were unsure. However, a few students included an additional translation, such as the ESV, NLT, MSG, and NASB.

Although I was interested in the primary translation read in church services, many students responded with multiple answers. Seven percent of students were not specific regarding the translation read and simply mentioned that “various” or “multiple” different versions. Of the 15 percent of responses that specified translations read and are categorized as “various,” 12 percent included the NIV, 11 percent included the ESV, 7 percent included the MSG, 5 percent included TPT, 4 percent included the NLT, 3 percent included the KJV, 3 percent included the NKJV, one percent included the NASB. Three percent of students responded “not sure.” The results suggested many churches use multiple translations. This may create a more well-rounded interpretation of Scripture for the congregation.

4. How often does your church use more than one translation in preaching and teaching?



When asked how often one’s church uses more than one translation in preaching and teaching, 4 percent of students responded “never,” 14 percent responded “almost never,” 41 percent responded “sometimes,” 34 percent responded “almost always,” 5 percent responded

“always,” and 3 percent responded “not sure,” as displayed Figure 4.4. Due to various methods used to translate Scripture and different audiences to which they are intended, the using different English translations is beneficial for better understanding the context and content.

5a. Which translation do you prefer to read on your own?

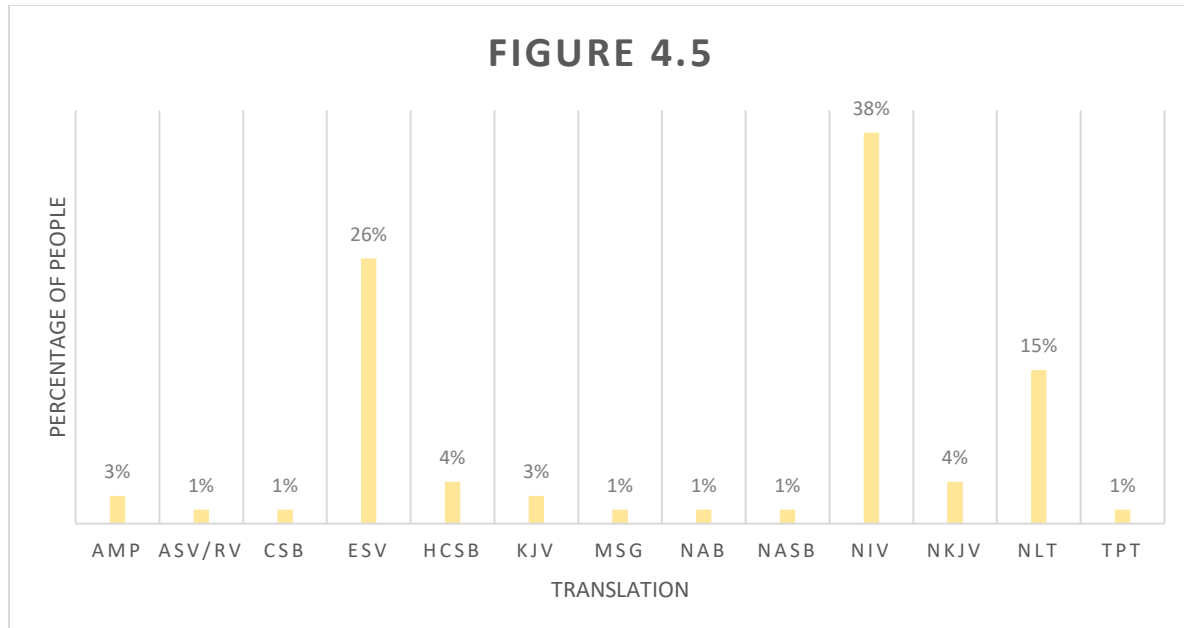


Figure 4.5 shows which translation students prefer to read on their own. The majority of responses were “ESV” at 26 percent, “NIV” at 38 percent, and “NLT” at 15 percent.

In the 2017 survey by Barna Group, 31 percent of people prefer the KJV, but only 3 percent of the respondents in this survey do (Barna Group, “State of the Bible 2017”). This may be because 71 percent of students in the Honors program who responded identify with AG/Pentecostalism or non-denominationalism, which are all churches that do not use the KJV. In addition, the KJV is less popular among college students from Generation Z. Thirteen percent of respondents prefer the NIV and nine percent prefer the ESV according to Barna Group. However, 38 percent prefer the NIV and 26 percent prefer the ESV according to this survey’s

results. Barna Group's survey did show that the percentage of people who prefer the KJV is decreasing, likely because the language is dated, for Barna Group surveyed a broader age range (Barna Group, "State of the Bible 2017").

### 5b. Why?

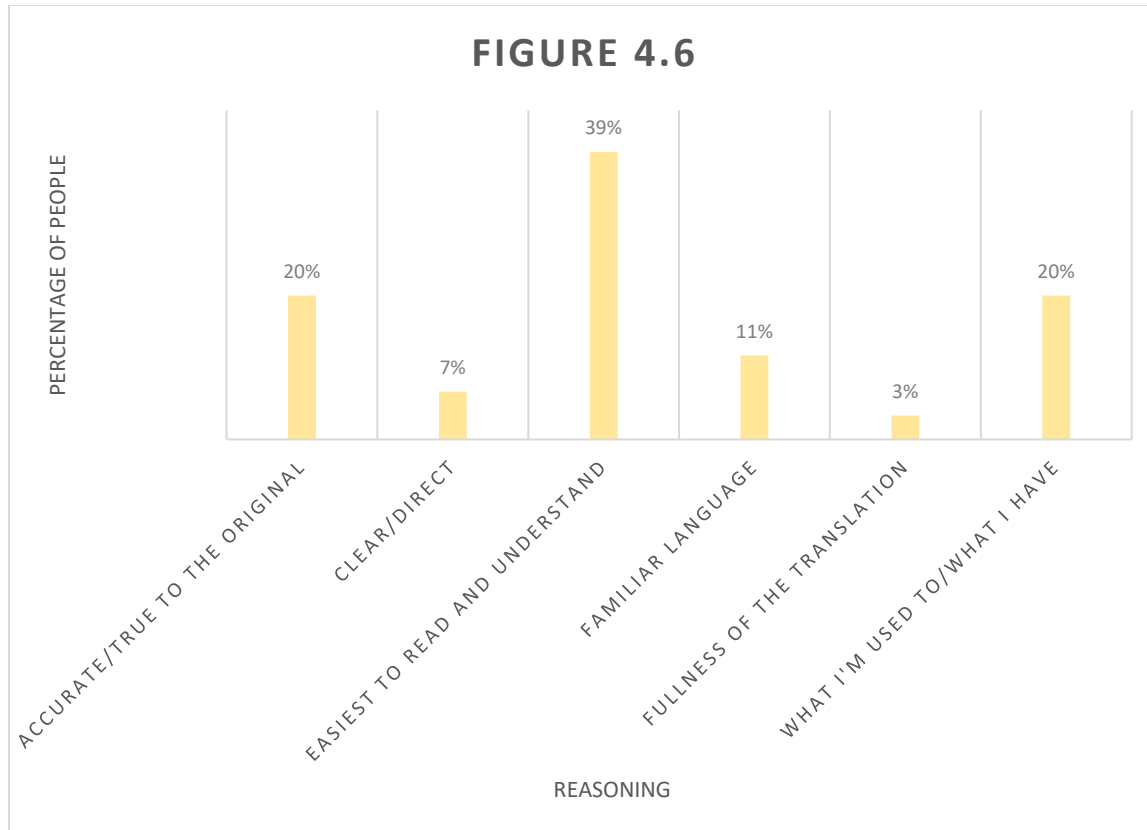


Figure 4.6 displays why students prefer their stated translation. Of the seventy-four responses for this question, sixty-one students provided an explanation as to why they read a certain translation(s). Many of the responses included multiple reasons, but each response was categorized according to the primary reasoning.

Twenty percent of students responded that they prefer their primary translation(s) due to their belief in its accuracy and precision to the original text, and it was often evident that the students with this explanation educated themselves regarding various translations, even though

almost every answer mentioned was a different translation, proving that different versions were more applicable to different people. Some of the translations mentioned include the ESV, KJV, NASB, NIV, and NLT.

Seven percent of people responded they prefer their stated translation because of how clear and direct they believe the translation to be, even though every translation mentioned was also different. The translations mentioned include the AMP, HCSB, NLT, and NRSV.

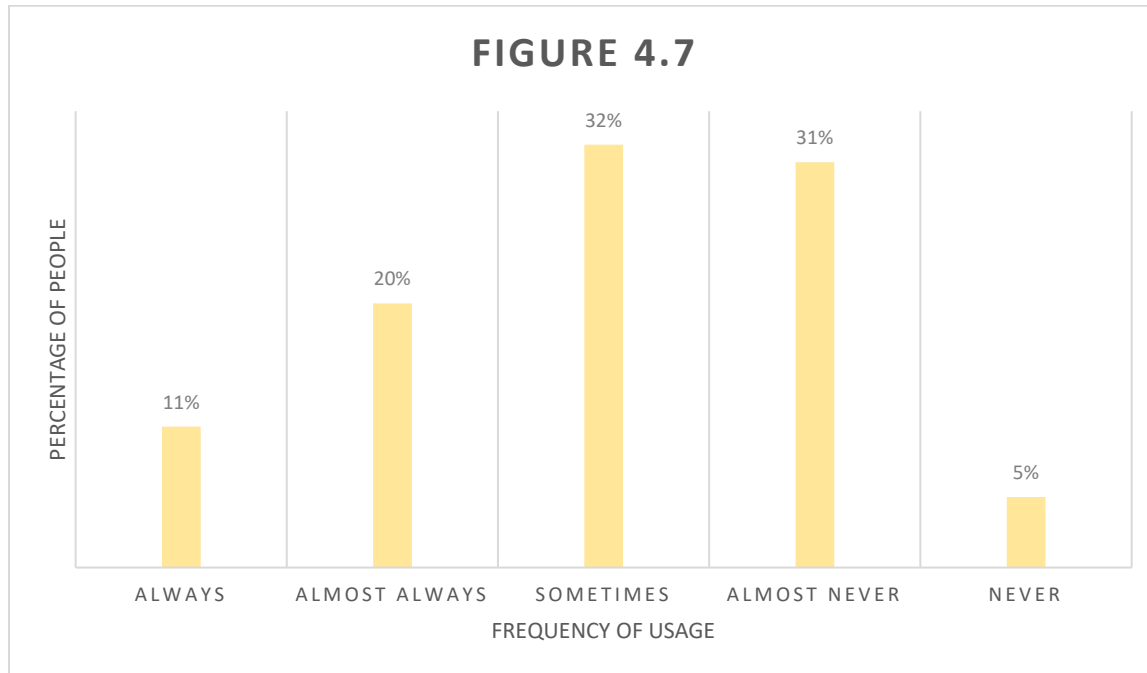
Thirty-nine percent of individuals said that they prefer the translation(s) they read because it is primarily the easiest to read and understand. A few people included additional explanations, including that the language is simpler but without losing meaning. Some of the translations mentioned include the ESV, MSG, NIV, NLT, and TPT.

Eleven percent of students responded that they read their specified translation simply because they like it for its familiar, modern language use and that they like how the text reads. Additionally, they pointed out that their preferred versions sound more natural to their ears. Some translations mentioned include the ESV, NIV, NKJV, and NLT.

Three percent of individuals replied that they prefer their stated translation for the fullness and richness of the translation. The main translation mentioned was the NKJV.

Another common response was that the students were accustomed to reading the translations they mentioned due to exposure to it and that the translations they read are the Bibles they have. Some also explained that they grew up with the translations and are used to them. If they provided an additional or primary explanation, I categorized the responses in another category with their first answer. Twenty percent of students were in this category. Some of the translations mentioned include ESV, KJV, NIV, and NLT.

6. How often do you use more than one translation in your personal reading? What is it? Why do you read it? (I.e. do you use one translation for deep study and another to have a better understanding of the passage?)



As Figure 4.7 shows, when asked how often students use more than one translation in their personal reading, 11 percent responded that they always read another one, 20 percent responded “almost always,” 32 percent responded “sometimes,” 31 percent responded “almost never,” and 5 percent responded “never.” Not everyone specifically mentioned how frequently they read more than one translation, so some responses are categorized based on wording. The secondary translations mentioned in every category include the ESV, MSG, and NLT.

Eleven percent of students responded that they always use more than one translation, additionally including the NIV. Some further explained that they often compare passages for accuracy, easier understanding, deep study, school projects, and a further explanation.

Twenty percent of people replied that they almost always use more than one translation when they read, such as the NKJV and TPT. A few students further explained that they do in



order to see different word choices, enhance understanding of both the words and context, and to read different perspectives.

Thirty-two percent of individuals responded that they sometimes utilize more than one translation, some even mentioning that they look at the original Greek and Hebrew texts as well. Some translations mentioned include the CSB, KJV, and NASB. Additional explanations include that the respondents want to read more current verbiage, to clarify or simplify, to gain new insights, for deep study, devotions, to cross-reference other translations.

Thirty-one percent of people responded that they almost never use another translation. Fourteen percent of students with this response provided no additional information as to why. Some students said that they would only stray from their preferred translation if they have trouble understanding, in order to get different perspectives, or when necessary. Translations mentioned include the NIV and NKJV.

Five percent of people replied that they never use more than one translation, providing no explanation.

## 7. What is your most significant frustration when it comes to reading the Bible?

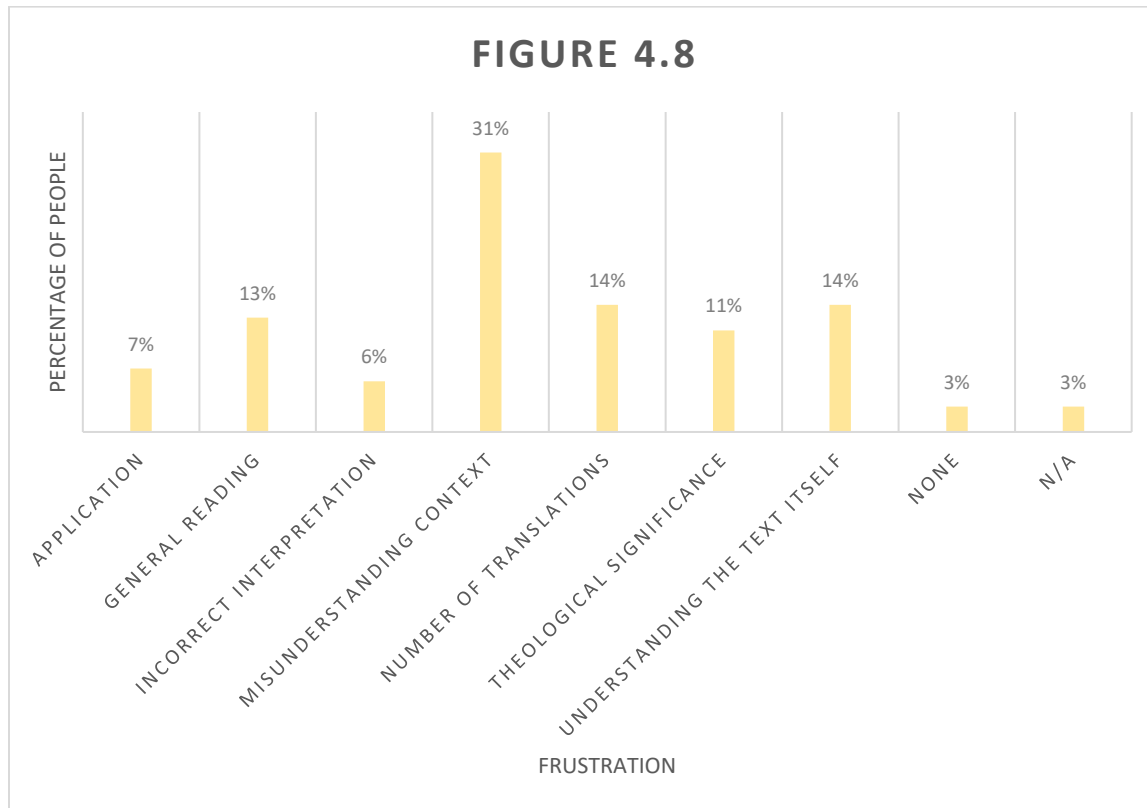


Figure 4.8 shows various frustrations that students have in regard to reading the Bible.

When asked what one's most significant frustration is with regard to reading Scripture, 3 percent did not respond, 3 percent have no frustrations, 7 percent struggle with knowing how to apply it to their lives, 13 percent have trouble reading in general, 6 percent fear interpreting Scripture incorrectly due to their lack of knowledge, 31 percent do not understand the culture and context, 14 percent are overwhelmed by the number of translations, 11 percent responded that they do not understand the theological significance, and 14 percent have difficulty understanding the text itself.

Seven percent of students struggle with knowing how to apply Scripture to their lives. Many of them elaborated on their confusion regarding what is still applicable to us today and the modern significance versus what was strictly for the people to which it was written.

Thirteen percent of students responded that they have difficulty reading in general. Some people explained that they forget details about what was previously read, have difficulty maintaining focus, do not know where to start reading, or are not motivated to read.

Six percent of students expressed frustration regarding interpreting Scripture incorrectly or out of context, a few feeling inadequate and ill-equipped to fully understand or study it. One respondent explained, “I sometimes feel like the Bible is sort of inaccessible to the common man, that only those who dedicate their lives to studying the Bible can truly understand it. It’s intimidating.”

With 31 percent of students in this category, most individuals responded that they have difficulty understanding the culture and context of the Bible, one of whom explained, “the original language, culture, time period, author, audience, genre of literature, and many other factors are all extremely important to getting an accurate understanding of the text, and I have to deeply research all of those things because I don’t know anything about any of those factors.” Some students mentioned that it would be more helpful if the books of the Bible were in chronological order, and some people also have difficulty understanding certain words.

Fourteen percent of students expressed frustration regarding the number of translations and their inability to read Scripture in the original languages, some worrying about “sacrificing textual accuracy when relying more on translations that are easier to read.” Similarly, a few others mentioned that different translations seem to change the actual meaning and worry about translator bias imposed upon the text.

Eleven percent of people described struggles with understanding what God is saying and the theological significance. Many expressed frustrations regarding what God truly means for his

people to know about Him, and they have a hard time reading the text as being alive and true, not understanding what God is revealing to them personally in the passages.

Fourteen percent of students expressed frustrations regarding understanding the text itself. Some do not always understand the meaning of both words and stories due to the dated language. One student replied, “Some verses seem to contradict, even though I know God doesn’t contradict Himself.”

It is advantageous to choose one hard copy of a Bible to use the most because it will help with memorization and recollection of Scripture. Having one main Bible will allow the reader to truly get to know it, especially when trying to recall certain sections and verses, as it aids visual memory. Overall, the Bible should be a translation that is both accurate and clearly understood. Author and biblical scholar Mark Ward, in his blogpost, provides some guidelines for choosing a translation. He encourages both individuals and churches to choose one translation and stick with it, explaining,

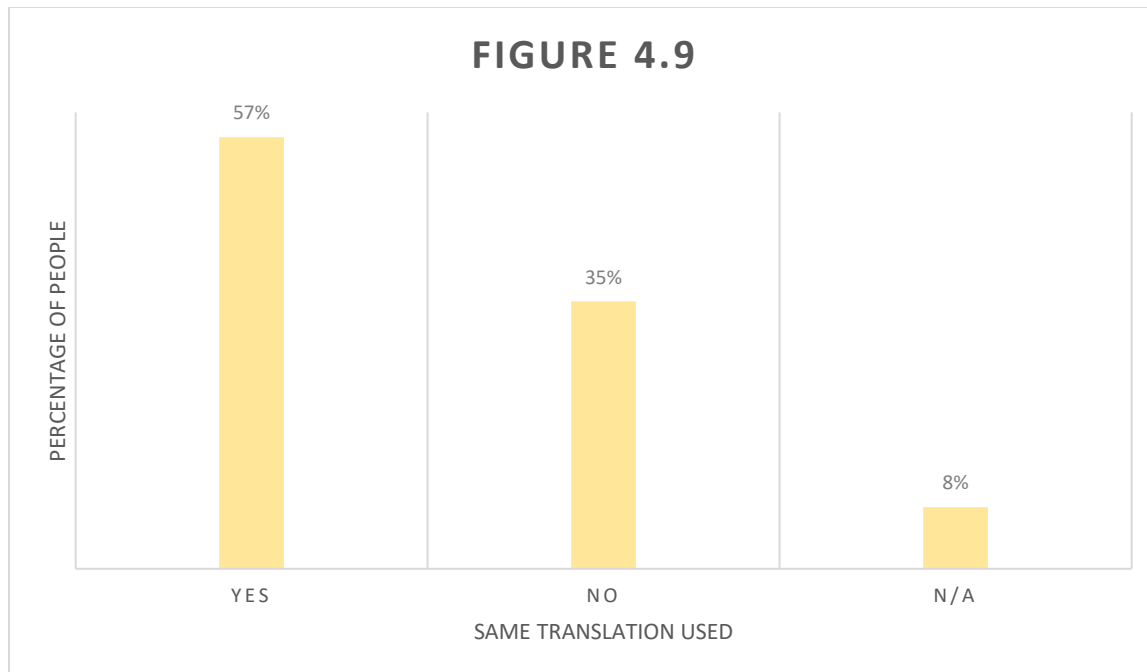
“And when an entire church, or group of churches, or even an entire nation of Christians, uses basically one Bible translation, genuinely wonderful things happen. An individual Christian’s knowledge of the Bible increases almost by accident, because certain phrases become woven into the language of the community. Christians are constantly reinforcing each other’s knowledge of the Bible every time they mention it in conversation. There is great value in having a common standard” (Ward).

Many students mentioned that most of their churches primarily use the NIV. This has transitioned to being the favored text read by most churches from once being the KJV for over three hundred years, but due to language changes and the variety of translations available, not

everyone reads the exact same version, and other translations are becoming more popular or more useful for different people.

Another frustration voiced was that students do not always understand the significance and meaning of the passages, especially in the Old Testament. However, it is important to keep in mind that the Scriptures all point to the Messiah, Jesus, in the New Testament. *The Bible Project* produces videos that are engaging and visual, providing the context and more information about the books of the Bible and various themes and words in Scripture. They exist “to help people experience the Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus” (*The Bible Project*). The videos are short, helpful summaries that allow the viewer to better understand the content.

In addition to hundreds of English translations, there is also an abundance of commentaries and study aids, and some students expressed frustration regarding what to consult. Some translations and study Bibles have introductions for each book to explain the context and maps as visual aids. When looking for guidance, pastors, professors, mentors, and friends are good people to ask whether they recommend certain Bible teachers or commentaries for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the culture and context, but readers should gather a variety of perspectives to reduce bias.



In Figure 4.9 I compared the responses from students regarding the translations their churches read and what they themselves read. I expected most students to read the same translation as their church, even if only using it as a secondary translation. However, I was surprised there seemed to be little correlation between the two, as only 57 percent of students read the same translation as their church and 35 percent do not. The remaining 8 percent did not provide enough information to form a conclusion.

Many of the students also provided educated explanations regarding why they read certain translations, proving that they researched them. The students were also from the Honors Program, demonstrating that they are also bright and aware of variances in translations, being able to read some of the harder and more literal translations. However, most translations are aimed at the common person. An adult who studies the Bible and has been a Christian for years may benefit more from reading the NASB or ESV than the NLT, which may be read by a teenager who recently began attending church and knows little about Christianity. People also

use different translations for different purposes, such as private casual reading, deep study, and public reading, so using multiple translations is typically beneficial.

The students provided similar explanations for a variety of translations, showing that each translation serves a purpose for different individuals and that God is not limited by one version of Scripture. That's the beauty of language: different words speak to people differently, and we cannot limit how God desires to speak to His people, especially because the English language has so many synonyms, and no two languages translate everything perfectly from one language to another. Relying on the Holy Spirit will help us interpret Scripture and reveal the truth about God. This research revealed how complex choosing a Bible translation is because there are so many translations that may factor in cultural innuendos and interpretations.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The abundance of Bible translations in the English language can be overwhelming, but it shows how many more resources we can access. The countless commentaries, study tools, maps, and dedicated biblical scholars allow us to understand Scripture better. No translation of Scripture will be “perfect” or acceptable to every group of readers, and as the field of biblical studies grows, more manuscripts are found, linguistic structures are analyzed, and language undergoes change and transition, the more Bibles will be revised and studied.

The research conducted in this thesis showed that some people do, in fact, use multiple translations but still have frustrations in regard to interpreting the Bible and fully understanding it. Because of cultural complexity and ambiguity of specific contexts, this could be an area of future research.

When searching for a Bible for personal use, it is important to keep in mind both the accuracy and clarity of the translation, and it is even more beneficial to use more than one translation for comparison. Various versions were translated or revised for different purposes. So, instead of asking, “What is the best Bible translation?” the better question is “What is the most useful Bible translation for my purposes?”

Certain levels of frustration led people to revise or translate another Bible and change the terminology used or the translation methods so that more people could more clearly understand the love of God and the good news about Jesus. The Holy Spirit equips us to do good work glorifying to God, and we must keep this in mind before tossing another translation aside as “wrong” or “inaccurate. We should be responsible with the resources and materials we have and be discerning regarding what is truth founded in God. As Gregory the Great commented on

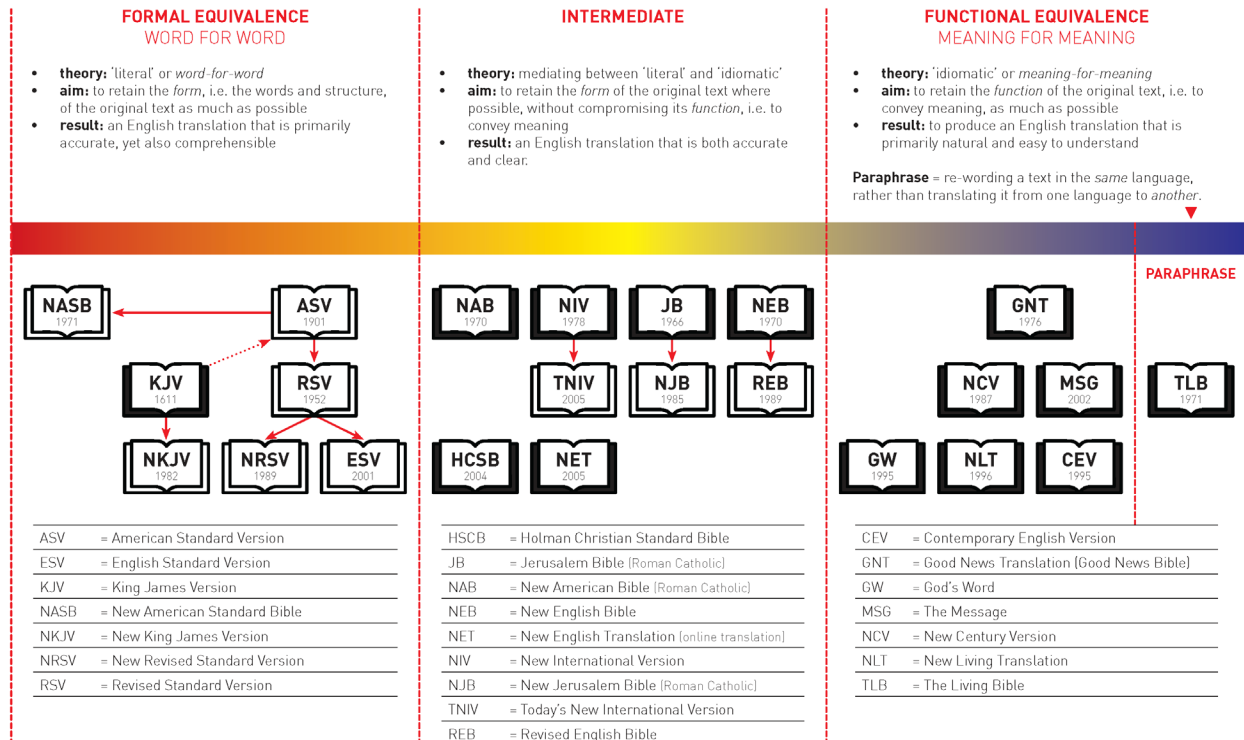


Job, “Scripture is like a river again, broad and deep, shallow enough here for the lamb to go wading, but deep enough there for the elephant to swim” (Naselli, para.3).

## Appendix A

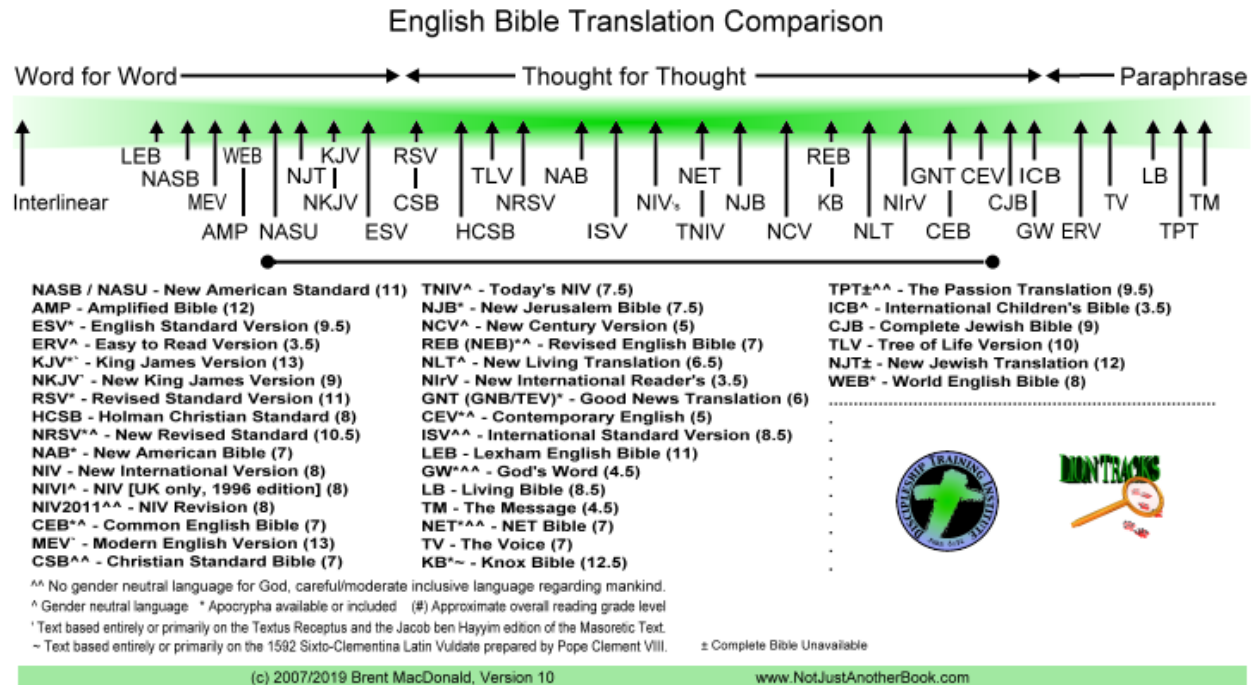
## COMPARISON OF ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

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The chart above compares English Bible translations and how they are translated. The three main divisions are formal equivalence, intermediate, and functional equivalence. It visualizes how various Bibles were translated and the year. This chart only contains a few of the hundreds of translations, focusing on the more well-known versions (Barry).

## Appendix B



This chart places a handful of English Bible translations on a spectrum from left to right of formal equivalence translations to functional equivalence translations (MacDonald).

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